

Polaris Charter School

~ Where True Potential Shines Bright ~



Charter School Application

Resubmitted to the New Hampshire Department of Education

By

Polaris Charter Foundation

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(a) Mission

The mission of Polaris Charter School is to create a joyful and exciting learning community for intellectually curious elementary-aged children. Through an engaging, inquiry-based curriculum, our students will develop the ability to communicate effectively, work collaboratively, think critically, and excel academically. Our program fosters creativity and the development of social and emotional skills, instilling a positive attitude about future studies and ensuring students are well-prepared for the challenges of an ever-changing world.

Polaris Charter School will:

- Implement a rigorous, project-oriented, interdisciplinary curriculum that ensures state standards are met and exceeded.
- Utilize flexible groupings in multi-age classrooms.
- Encourage each student's progress with personal learning plans, combining social and academic standards with individualized goals.
- Motivate students to learn at their own pace and reach their full potential with a move-on-when-ready approach that allows for accelerated learning and is based on subject mastery.

(b) Governance and Organizational Structure and Plan

Ability to Submit Application

In accordance with provisions to RSA 194-B:3, V, the Polaris Charter School application to establish a charter school has been submitted by a group of 10 or more parents.

Polaris Charter School Committee has also applied to State of New Hampshire for non-profit status, and will operate as Polaris Charter Foundation, with a Board of (5) five members (Please see Appendix B).

Board of Trustees

In accordance with RSA 194-B: 5, Polaris will be governed by a seven member Board of Trustees that is responsible for oversight over the operations of the charter school. The Board's specific mission is to review all policies, hiring, and practices and insure that all reflect the mission and vision of the charter school. The Board hires the school Director and reviews all other hiring after selection is made. The Board has statutory responsibility for reporting progress and achievement of the school's stated goals.

Trustee selection will be based on personal and professional background and commitment to the school's mission, support and sustainability. Trustees will represent the diversity of stakeholders and contributors:

- Two (2) non-parents representing the N.H. business community
- Two (2) non-parents representing the N.H. education community
- Two (2) founders and/or parents (Parent Steering Committee Representatives)
- One (1) School Director (non-voting).

The Board of Trustees can establish ex-officio board members and/or advisors who will be non-voting. All Board meetings are open to the public unless personnel issues or grievances are being discussed.

Officers

The initial Board of Trustees will develop the schedule of terms for board members and will establish terms and policies for electing Board officers. Initial officers shall include: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Marketing/Publicity and Fundraising/Grant Writing. Officers of the Board shall be elected by majority vote of those present at the annual organizational meeting to be held in August of each year and to serve until the next annual organizational meeting.

Governance

The Board of Trustees of Polaris supports a governance philosophy whereby the board has an advisory role, focusing on community networking, fundraising and grant writing. We strive to have each Board member bring value to the school through active participation and to sustain cooperation and harmony between staff and the Board. Lastly, we recognize that the success of our school lies in part in our ability to govern with commitment and skill.

Committees

The Board of Trustees may authorize one or more of its members to serve on a board committee or to act as an official Board representative to other associations, school districts, or offices for any matter pertaining to the business or policy of the school. No opinion, decision, or commitment on behalf of the Board however, can be made by a Board representative or subcommittee without Board authorization.

Parent Steering Committee

A Parenting Steering Committee will be created within the first few weeks of school. The committee will consist of a volunteer parent committee with two representatives on the Board of Trustees. Board representatives serve a renewable one year term and represent the Committee in all Board decisions. The Committee serves as the communication vehicle between parents, the School Director, and Board of Trustees.

The Committee will also be responsible for:

- Celebrations in the classrooms

- Working with teachers to identify classroom needs not included in the budget
- Fundraising and donation requests

Start-up Committee

During the school's first year of planning, a design and development team shall work on all facets of start-up and readiness. This team will be comprised of the founders and Board of Advisors, including innovative educators.

Board of Advisors

The founders group will be augmented by a non-voting Board of Advisors, which represents academia, the arts, research, students, faculty, legislators, and experienced personnel from other charter schools. This committee will add experienced individuals who can advise the founders in putting the charter in place. The Board of Advisors will meet on an "as-needed basis" as the Board of Trustees establishes jurisdiction.

(c) Methods by Which Trustees and their Terms are Determined

The initial trustees will be selected from the founders and Board of Advisors who have already participated in the development of this charter. The start-up committee will determine the first Board meeting and start-up members will attend to insure a smooth transition.

(d) General Description of Potential Location

The start-up committee has established a relationship with New Hampshire Representative Mike Ball, of CBRE commercial real estate company, who has volunteered his time to act as a tenant representative on behalf of Polaris Charter School to secure the best lease terms possible. We anticipate a campus large enough to house up to 52 students during the first year and allow for growth to 120 students within first few years.

Once the charter is approved, the initial trustees will pursue, negotiate, and arrange facility options. The location sought is along the Concord to Nashua corridor, where driving from any location will be possible by major roadways.

(e) Maximum Number, Age Levels, and Other Information About Pupils Served

During its opening year, Polaris will serve up to 52 students, who are from five to eleven years old at the time of entry. Solely for the purpose of required reporting, mandatory testing or assisting transfer students, grade level assignment will be based on the age, and not the achievement level, of each student.

Pupils will be placed in multi-age classrooms capped at (15) fifteen students per class, with the ultimate goal of twelve to thirteen students per class. New incoming students will be added each year until the school is fully enrolled. The school intends to serve up to 120 students in its primary location. As interest increases, and as determined by the Board, a satellite school or schools may be created to avail options for students in other parts of the state.

Satellite sites will accommodate approximately 30 students per site in cost-conscious locations such as unoccupied town space, office buildings, and/or space shared with another tenant.

As a state-sponsored charter school, Polaris will be an open enrollment school of choice for students throughout New Hampshire from every community and socioeconomic stratum. The school will comply with current statutory provisions that govern acceptances, whereby not more than 10% of the resident pupils in any grade shall be eligible to transfer to a charter school in any school year without the approval of the local school board. Five spaces will be reserved in the first year of operation for children of founders to acknowledge the contribution of the startup, per Ed 318.05. Siblings of enrolled students, who also demonstrate the characteristics most likely to benefit from Polaris' innovative approach, will be given preference in admission. On a space-available basis, Polaris will accept students funded in alternative ways for available slots, including tuition students from out of state.

Pupils to be Served

Students who choose Polaris will:

- Seek an accelerated curriculum that is individualized to the student's strengths and weaknesses.
- Desire a differentiated program design that puts emphasis on a student's personal learning style and needs.
- Have the ability to study topics in depth.
- Wish to be in a "community" school setting emphasizing personal responsibility, respect, self-awareness, social awareness and responsible decision making skills.
- Desire a setting where differences are celebrated and accepted.

(f) Curriculum that Meets or Exceeds State Standards in Subject Areas Offered

As part of the vision and mission of NH Department of Education's Innovations in Education initiative, Polaris Charter School will work in partnership with students, families, and the school community to ensure each student acquires the knowledge, skills and disposition necessary to become personally fulfilled and socially responsible.

Founders envision a school that will embrace each student's individuality and nurture their intellectual curiosity while empowering them to maximize their educational opportunities. The curriculum will support the schools' mission by:

- Creating a standards-based, non-competitive, multi-grade educational environment which serves both the social/emotional and academic needs of Polaris' students.
- Providing students with a mastery learning approach to study the core curriculum in-depth and at an accelerated pace, allowing for novelty in student outcomes and emphasizing higher level thinking skills.
- Offering a rigorous advanced curriculum designed to engage and challenge intellectually curious elementary-age children.
- Meeting or exceeding the state's core competencies and standards.

Special Curriculum Features

- **Interdisciplinary Curriculum**

Polaris will utilize an innovative, technology enhanced, interdisciplinary curriculum in order to create an optimal learning environment where each student can explore their interests while learning at his/her appropriate instructional level and pace. Through the use of interdisciplinary learning, Polaris students will engage in problem-solving activities designed to promote imaginative, critical, and independent thinking skills. An emphasis on the development of verbal and non-verbal communication skills will foster a safe, nurturing environment in which students will gain self-awareness, confidence, and camaraderie. Students will benefit from educational programming that allows them to question, explore, investigate, and discover information across subject areas, thus allowing them to make organic connections between what they have learned and how it relates to the larger world.

- **Individual Learning Plans**

To maximize learning and to help guide students to reach their full potential, each student at Polaris Charter School will have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). In the fall, after a period of observation and formative assessment, teachers will meet with

students and their parents or guardians to develop their ILP. We understand that each child is unique; having different learning styles, strengths and weaknesses, and interest areas. We want to use our students' strengths and interests to support their areas of need. The initial and subsequent conferences will allow us to create and monitor individual plans for growth, based on the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English/ language arts and the non-cognitive curriculum selected or developed by the school.

Our ILPs will also be used as a tool to challenge our students and to encourage them to monitor their own progress toward meeting the stated objectives . We want our students to have a true understanding of how they learn and what works best for them, so that they can advocate for themselves and maximize their educational opportunities. This is a critical skill that can be carried with them throughout their academic career and will help them become personally fulfilled and socially responsible pre-teens.

ILPs will be reviewed at least quarterly through parent/teacher/student conferences scheduled during the year. If at any time a member of the staff or a parent/guardian identifies an area of struggle or advanced need, they may request a meeting to set up further intervention (see RTI).

- **Response to Intervention (RTI)**

Polaris will use an RTI inspired framework adapted to the needs of our students. The traditional tiered system designed to support students' areas of academic challenge will be enhanced to address those who need a faster paced, more complex, and in-depth curriculum and/or to support the development of social competence. Implementing this model of a Response to Intervention will allow us to address students who are not progressing at above-grade levels commensurate with their abilities, as well as students whose social maturation requires additional support. Progress will be measured through the use of observational analysis, rubrics, formative and summative assessments, and self-evaluation to document mastery. Once mastery has been documented, students will be given opportunities to continue learning with enriched and advanced materials related to their area of strength. Students will be active participants in monitoring their progress.

- **Class Structure**

Flexible groupings will be used to help promote community and collaboration amongst our students. Polaris classrooms will provide a nurturing and supportive environment where students will learn to encourage each other and learn from one another. Instructors will have the freedom to allow students to work individually or to place them in small groups depending on their abilities, interests, and academic goals at any given

time. Ideally, class size will be capped at 12-13 students in order to provide individualized attention and to ensure staff is accessible to students needing guidance with their social/emotional interactions while working in groups.

- **Instruction**

Students' unique needs will be met by using a rigorous, responsive curriculum in which students will be given the opportunity to study topics with great depth and breadth. Teachers will use individual (or small group) 'Learning Contracts' for interdisciplinary units, projects, or assignments as way to ensure student work is sufficiently integrated and academic needs are being met across subject areas. Students will be provided with numerous opportunities for project-based learning and real-world experiences. Instructors will make every effort to adjust assignments to meet the varied learning styles of individual students. They will also regularly make use of technology in the classroom, as a way to help students research, evaluate, and share information.

English Language Arts

Students will participate in engaging, interdisciplinary activities to promote strong achievement and enjoyment in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Progress toward mastery will be monitored by incorporating the Common Core State Standards in English/ Language Arts into each child's Individualized Learning Plan.

Reading is a complex process that encompasses both learning how to read and deriving meaning from text. Our emergent readers will develop phonemic awareness and apply their learned skills individually and in small and large group settings. Using phonics in concert with whole language reading instruction will provide a balanced literacy program for our emergent readers. We will also put special attention on developing comprehension strategies. We want our readers to interact with the text by making and validating predictions, making text to self, text to text, and text to world connections, and by questioning; to seek further meaning or for self-monitoring. A variety of print material will be available for instruction, including mass media, fiction, non-fiction, drama and poetry.

At Polaris students will learn about expository, narrative, and persuasive types of writing. As they are writing about topics that are of high interest to them, an emphasis will be put on grammar and other conventions of writing (spelling, punctuation, paragraph structure, etc...). We want students to feel comfortable expressing their ideas and feelings using their written language and will encourage creative writing including poetry, script writing, song writing, etc. Writing will not stop with pencil and paper; students will use the internet and other technologies to express their ideas. Blogging

and emailing national or international pen pals are just some of the ways students at Polaris will express their written language. They will also have many opportunities to present their work both in and outside of the classroom.

Mathematics

Students will participate in engaging, interdisciplinary activities to promote strong achievement and enjoyment in using mathematical tools to solve problems and to communicate symbolically. Progress toward mastery will be monitored by incorporating the Common Core State Standards in mathematics into each child's Individualized Learning Plan.

Mathematics will focus on mastering basic skills as well as using abstract, in-depth thinking and problem-solving. Students will learn numeracy, algebraic skills, geometry and probability and statistics using inquiry and creative thinking skills of flexibility and fluency. They will also master mental math, and be able to communicate their reasoning orally, symbolically and in writing. Instruction will focus on the application of mathematic principles to real world, age appropriate situations.

Science

Our science curriculum will include Earth/Space Science, Life Science, and Physical Science. Using inquiry and research-based learning, students will discover connections between science, the other disciplines and their daily lives. Instruction will include science process skills (observing, inferring, measuring, communication, etc.), which will allow them to think critically and be responsible, compassionate contributors to the world around them. Students will have a multitude of opportunities to experience the wonder of science by participating in hands-on, multi-sensory activities including, but not limited to experiments, field studies, and field trips. Students will receive a well-rounded, in-depth understanding of the topics they study and will also be expected to present their findings orally and in writing.

Social Studies

Students at Polaris Charter School will study history, geography, and government (including civics) in an integrated, holistic approach. By studying scientific data, literature, students will learn how historical figures and events influenced and shaped the world as we know it today. They will understand how the past can predict the future and begin to grasp the importance of how the decisions made today will impact the future. Students will also study other countries/cultures to accept and understand differences as well as being able to identify similarities from one culture to the next. Having a sense of our place in the world is crucial to appreciating all we can learn from it. Our studies will be practical yet enriching. We will use a variety of approaches to

make these concepts as real to our students as possible including historical reenactments (doing plays of specific events, putting on festivals/fairs, etc...), field trips to historical sites (America's Stonehenge, Freedom Trail, Plimoth Plantation, etc...) , and mock trials, for example, as well as research-based projects.

Technology

Students will acquire functional technology skills in:

- Computer word processing,
- Electronic information (databases, Internet) retrieval and use,
- Ethical use of technology, and
- Electronic media for presentation of projects.

Students will develop basic technology skills, respect for and knowledge of hardware, and understanding technology as a tool to assist learning by using a thematic, interdisciplinary approach.

Students will be introduced to technology in developmentally appropriate ways, using computers and other technology for research, assignments, and presentations, recognizing that young children learn best through direct experience with the world around them. Multimedia software, Internet use, and technological equipment will be integrated into projects throughout the curriculum.

World Language

Polaris students will have the opportunity to attend world language classes during their elementary years. Knowing other languages and understanding other cultures are important skill sets for students as they prepare to live and work in a global society. Our goal is to offer a choice of language courses that may include French, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and Latin. Polaris administrators will survey parents and students regarding their area of interest as part of the process in determining what language courses to offer. Students will receive exposure to oral, written, and visual communication skills while also learning about the historical and current cultures of the people who speak that language.

The Arts

Polaris students will be encouraged to express their individuality and creativity through art and music. Students will experience an engaging arts program designed to expose them to a variety of art forms including fine arts, craftwork, applied art, general music education, and performing arts. To reinforce these lessons, students will then apply their knowledge and refine their skills as they incorporate various art forms into the

presentation of numerous theme-related academic research projects throughout the school year.

Polaris administrators will survey parents and students regarding their interest level in the arts and work to identify local resources for families interested in pursuing specific programs such as instrument lessons, painting lessons, etc. and when possible arrange for classes to be held on-site.

Health, Physical Education

Students will learn and develop the necessary skills for promoting life-long personal fitness and health. Physical education will be integrated into classroom activities, offered throughout the week during recesses, and taught once a week in a structured class. The physical education program will encourage the development of flexibility, coordination, strength, gross motor skills, and cardiovascular fitness.

Social and Emotional Learning

Students will participate in a social and emotional learning program where they will learn and practice specific skills to develop social competency in areas such as self awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Standards will be established in this area to facilitate inclusion on each student's Individualized Learning Plan and potentially in the enhanced design of the school's Response to Intervention tool.

(g) Academic and Other Learning Goals and Objectives

The New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) and the Common Core State Standards will be used to guide instruction in all subject areas. Instructional strategies will include individualized or small group lessons to address basic skills needs in reading, writing, mathematics, and spelling. Generally, all subject-area content will be taught through an integrated, interdisciplinary approach, using research-based strategies and student interest to guide instruction. In addition to subject area knowledge, critical skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, communication, and organization will be taught by providing challenging, experiential curriculum with opportunities for students to question, practice, exhibit, reflect on and assess their own and each others' knowledge and skills.

Polaris' Academic Goals:

- A comparison of annual objectives written into Individualized Learning Plans will demonstrate growth in English/ language arts, mathematics and in social competence.

- Students will demonstrate progress on critical skills through portfolios and classroom exhibitions.
- 95% parent or guardian school involvement.

(h) Achievement Tests to be Used to Measure Pupil Academic and Other Goal Achievements

Achievement will be reflected through a variety of assessment strategies, including but not limited to portfolios, conferences, observations, norm-referenced tests, and presentations. The school will cater to different learning styles and methods. The School Director in partnership with teachers, parents and students will develop the means to assess progress and student performance.

Polaris' assessment plan will focus on three goals:

- To help students reach their full potential
- To inform teachers about student progress and to evaluate the success or failure of instructional strategies and
- To inform and include parents as partners in the educational process.

Student achievement will be measured by a variety of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments, anecdotal records, portfolio assessments, and norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests. Tests may include the New England Assessment Program (NECAP), California Achievement Tests (CAT-5), and the Northwest Evaluation Assessments (NWEA) as supplemental standardized measures. At the beginning of the school year, students will be given benchmark assessments for reading and mathematics, using the Common Core State Standards. Each child will have a portfolio to be reviewed at least twice a year with parents/guardians. Other assessments may include, but are not limited to observations, anecdotal records, portfolio assessments, tests/quizzes, rubrics, checklists, and student self-assessments.

This plan will ensure that teachers and parents have the data they need to know how students are doing and how to help students progress. Students will learn to reflect on their effort and achievement to establish new academic and social goals. Teachers, parents, and students will work together as a team to celebrate success and establish academic, personal, and social targets.

(i) Graduation Requirements

N/A as intended for High Schools applications.

(j) Staffing Overview

Period of Planning and Development

The time period from authorization until 4-6 months before the school opens to students is considered the Period of Planning and Organizational Development. Planning will commence once authorization is granted. Planners have considered this period consuming approximately one year, based on assumption of authorization by Spring 2011. During this time of planning and organizational development project staff will include start-up coordinators, as needed consulting specialists, personnel from other organizations, and volunteers.

Tasks related to school development include:

- Planning and coordination
- Materials development and marketing
- Curriculum development and course design
- Board initiations and government training
- Set-up of administrative systems
- Strategic planning
- Financial operations, revenue initiatives
- Facility initiatives
- Dissemination of material to schools, parents, and colleges; outreach to selected corporations, gifted resources; research and visitation.

Period of School Readiness to open

Once building site and classrooms are secured, the Coordinating Council will put in place a school Board of Trustees. The Board will begin the staff searches and selection process.

Staffing

Polaris Charter School is committed to recruiting staff with a wide range of skills and qualities, teaching and administrative experience, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Other desired qualities and qualifications include: a commitment to the mission and vision of the school, an ability to work effectively on a team with colleagues, students, families, and community members; experience with a variety of instructional approaches, including project-based learning; interest or expertise working with a diverse student population; and a commitment to their own professional growth.

The following is an estimated staffing plan for Polaris Charter School in its first year of operations:

1 director
1 administrative position
3 - 4 teachers
3 - 4 assistant teachers
36 hours/week extracurricular instructors paid hourly
1 special ed liaison

School Director

This individual will be responsible for supporting and leading an educational environment that will:

- Allow faculty and students to maximize achievements consistent with Polaris' philosophy
- Establish a school culture built on respect, responsibility, support, and common goals of excellence
- Act as a public relations liaison, including working with local school districts
- Assist faculty with all aspects of school as needed
- Assume overall responsibility for supervision of staff and students
- Hire additional administrative staff as needed with increased student population
- Follow all Polaris, State and Federal administrative requirements and standards
- Supervise and collaboratively evaluate the work of staff, and submit recommendations to appropriate staff members for promoting, retaining and dismissing members of the Polaris staff
- Oversee schedules created in collaboration with all staff members
- Seek and provide adequate testing and evaluation program for students
- Research grant programs, writing funding applications and overseeing student run entrepreneurial sources of revenue
- Initiate and participate in consultation with teachers, parents, students and the community regarding the welfare of any student or other issues relative to Polaris, and
- Promote safety and good health practices by adherence to public codes/regulations and Polaris standards.

Director Qualifications

- Meets all NH regulations for eligibility and teacher certification, preferred
- Master's Degree from an accredited university, preferred
- Minimum of 5 years teaching and/or school administration experience, preferred
- Experience with administrative duties
- Background in elementary education, especially with gifted/talented education, preferred

- Demonstrated ability to individualize and make use of techniques to address the needs of high capacity learners
- Such other qualifications as the Board may find appropriate.

Administrative Assistant

Assists administration in all aspects of running Polaris, including but not limited to reception, mailings, data entry, record keeping, and public relations/communications. This position to become full-time as enrollment increases.

Teachers

In staffing Polaris, the Board of Trustees will comply with RSA 194-B: 14. Section IV requires the teaching staff of a charter school to consist of a minimum of fifty percent of faculty with New Hampshire certification, or having at least three years teaching experience.

Polaris anticipates a teaching staff of one full time teacher and one full time assistant for each classroom, with some assistant services provided by volunteers or teachers in training. In addition teachers will:

- Be highly qualified or certified in New Hampshire (or demonstrate progress toward achieving certification)
- Be experienced differentiating instruction, especially for high ability students
- Commit to the success of Polaris’ students, and to Polaris’ mission, and collaborate with faculty as a member of a dynamic instructional team
- Teach to the very best of their ability
- Keep administration updated regularly of their needs and wants in order to maximize student achievement
- Model lifelong learning
- Develop a staff development program and plan that follows the Standards of the National Staff Development Council
- Build a professional learning community via learning models
- Work as a team with entire faculty to maximize integration of knowledge across disciplines.

Projected Teacher Needs

School Year	Students	Teachers/student ratio	Teachers
2012-2013	48-52	12 -13	4

2013-2014 Campus expandable to 120	90-120	12-13	7-10
2014-2015*	150	12-13	10-12

* Polaris will develop satellite sites after the first years of operation.

Special Education Liaison

Polaris recognizes that some students have special educational needs and may require specialized educational programming that goes beyond what is ordinarily provided by regular classroom programs. Therefore, a special education liaison will be hired.

The Special Education Liaison will coordinate all state and federal requirements as necessary for Polaris to fulfill the responsibilities which fall to a New Hampshire charter school, in accordance with RSA 194-B:11. This position will become full-time as enrollment increases. To this end, this individual will:

- Ensure that documented special education students reach their maximum potential
- Realize that all students are special and may need individualized help in certain areas
- Commit to the success of Polaris' students, and to Polaris' mission, and collaborate with faculty as a member of a dynamic instructional team
- Establish relationships with district Special Education Departments and work with the students' school districts to coordinate services for students with special needs, 504s or IEPs.

This individual will also work with local agencies and consultants (some listed in Section U) to identify these children throughout New Hampshire.

Volunteer Staffing

Polaris will use parents, districts, and college campuses to initiate volunteer programs. Polaris will also be in contact with agencies that service low-income families and other local family services interested in collaborating.

Polaris has also been approached by IT Director, and Professor of Computer Science at Manchester Community College, Professor Adnan Tahir to set-up Polaris' Network by implementing Sakai Learning Management System. This technology is used to enhance teaching, learning and research in a collaborative community. Mr. Tahir also has also offered to teach technology classes and help us to have a 21st century facility. This Learning Management System will also be used as a portal for communication between parents and educators.

Polaris has also been approached by several educators such as administrators, educational experts, and paraprofessionals who have offered to volunteer to consult with us from set-up to operation.

(k) Personnel Compensation Plan

Salary

The Director and Lead Teachers of Polaris Charter School will be paid a salary. The salaries of these full time personnel shall be paid bi-weekly (contingent on Polaris approval).

Assistant Teachers, paid experts, and all non-teacher personnel, whether full-time or part-time, will be paid on an hourly rate as employees or as independent contractors based on negotiated rates. See budget for salary expectations.

Vacation

Polaris Charter School will publish an annual calendar of holidays and vacations during which the School will officially be closed. Full-time teachers will also receive a maximum of two (2) days of paid personal leave per year. Personal leave days must be used during the school year in which they are accrued.

Sick Leave

Sick leave is available to employees to provide for full salary and benefits for absences due to personal illness or injury that prevent the employee from working.

Full-time staff shall accrue sick leave at the rate of 5 days per school year. If specified in the employee's contract, part-time staff, or staff working part of the school year shall accrue sick leave on a prorated basis to reflect the proportion of time or working months that the employee's schedule represents in relation to a full time schedule. Employees may accrue up to a total maximum accrual of 20 days of sick leave. All employees shall

inform the Director of an anticipated absence as soon as possible, and such leave (other than for unexpected circumstances) must be pre-approved by the Director. The Director may require an employee to verify the claimed reason for any absence.

Retirement

Polaris Charter School intends to participate in the New Hampshire State Retirement Program for public teachers according to state requirements for our Full-time salaried teachers.

Other Benefits

The Board of Trustees will determine a benefit and leave policy during the period of planning and development. With available funding, the school hopes to offer options that include health, disability, and retirement in order to attract highly qualified teachers for the school. The leave policy will reflect the federal and state rules and policies and be determined by the Board of Trustees.

(I) Pupil Transportation

Charter school students will have access to transportation to the class program only if they reside in the district where the charter school is located. The charter school will comply with charter law provisions that govern student transportation under Section 194-B:2, which states:

“Attendance at a charter school for the purposes of transportation shall not constitute assignment under the provisions of RSA 189:6 and RSA 189:8. Pupils who reside in the school district in which the open enrollment or charter school is located shall be provided transportation to that school by the district on the same terms and conditions as provided for in RSA 189:6 and RSA 189:8 and that transportation is provided to pupils attending other public schools within that district. However, any added costs for such transportation services shall be borne by the charter school.”

Students attending the charter school who reside in the host school district shall ride direct transportation with the charter school providing for added route costs, if so billed.

For the purposes of open enrollment, neither the sending nor the receiving school district shall be obligated to provide transportation services for pupils attending an open enrollment school outside the pupil's resident district. No transportation will be provided by a sending school district or receiving charter school for students whose residence is other than where the school program is located.

We foresee students applying from many different school districts. One goal of charter school personnel will be to assist parents and students who wish to coordinate personal transportation. For students in secondary district special education programs, the charter school will assist with transportation arrangements (e.g., identifying shared routes, coordinating convenient “bus stops”).

**(m) Statement of Assurances Related to Non-Discrimination
According to Relevant State and Federal Laws**

Polaris does not discriminate in the administration of its admissions and educational programs, activities or employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation or marital status. This statement is a reflection of the schools philosophy and position in embracing and celebrating all diversity.

Polaris intends to work closely with local and state agencies to seek out and identify intellectually gifted children from low-income families.

**(n) Method of Coordinating with a Pupil’s Local Education Agency
(LEA) for Matters Pertaining to Any Special Education Programs
or Services Including Method of Compliance with All Federal
and State Laws Pertaining to Educationally Disabled Pupils**

NH charter school statute RSA 194-B:11, §III, states that all options available to the parent and the local education agency are retained. Regarding special education, options now available to parents and the local district include: 1) the district concurring on the parent’s or student’s desire for choice and attendance at this school, and assuring whatever services the student needs continue to be received, 2) the parent accepting or rejecting the district-proposed education plan in full or in part, 3) the district concurring with the choice placement as a general placement and providing the special services needed after hours, 4) an education plan of short duration or one that allows for a trial period in the charter school to assess suitability for a student and the services needed, if any, in the charter school environment, 5) the parent refusing special services and matriculating the student without services, should the charter school find this acceptable in a particular instance, and 6) should the placement be disputed, either the parent or the school district initiating the resolution of disagreements through provisions of the Department of Education.

Polaris will operate in compliance with all state and federal laws to provide appropriate educational programming for our students with special needs. Our school will work closely

with a student's local education agency to ensure a smooth transition and will review all documentation pertaining to the student's educational needs. In the event that a student comes with a 504 Accommodation Plan or an Individualized Education Plan, appropriate staff will meet with the LEA's special education team when the student enters our school and on an annual basis to review and adjust educational goals. Communication will be encouraged, and Polaris teachers will be available to speak with representatives from their student's LEA.

Polaris will employ an LEA liaison to ensure that students documented with special needs will achieve their maximum potential and to oversee proper handling of special education matters.

The school responsibilities are:

1. To assure that districts are alerted about requests for admission.
2. To provide information about the school to the sending district, and, when possible, attend meetings for the purpose of district review of choice requests.
3. To obtain copies of parent rights provided to parents by districts and to assist parents who want choice to understand their own district's procedures.
4. To obtain copies of any IEP that is in place, and assure that each teacher and service provider listed as having responsibility for implementing the IEP has a complete copy of this document and explanation as to what is required of the charter school.
5. To keep name, address, phone, and email for the person(s) in each district who are responsible for special education vis-à-vis students attending the charter school, and make contact, when needed.
6. To alert the sending district of pre-referral issues that rise to a level of concern of needing district attention.
7. To meet with special education administrators or their designees to understand how districts would like certain procedures to take place (e.g., should the charter school schedule and call a required meeting or should the LEA).
8. To notify the LEA if the IEP written in one setting does not seem pertinent for the student's needs within the charter school and to ask for a review of the IEP when a portion of the IEP seems inadequate, unneeded, inappropriate, or too long in duration.
9. To assist the local education agency in development of the IEP and procedures designed to ensure that individualized education programs are monitored in a regular and systematic manner.
10. To work with the district and articulate services or accommodations the student's needs, from the charter school's perspective, and to continue the dialogue about concerns until they are reviewed.

Polaris has recruited and identified professionals such as Brenda Lee, M.Ed. from New Hampshire Counseling Center, who provides curriculum based assessments, and serves as an Educational Liaison conveying information regarding psychological testing and/or therapy to schools systems attempting to develop IEP or Section 504 plans to address students' learning, behavioral, or emotional challenges.

Polaris has also identified Jennifer Stylianios, a certified pediatric occupational therapist, as well as an assisted technology specialist to consult with our Board on matters regarding OT, disabilities and program development.

(o) Eligibility and Admission Procedures

Eligibility

Polaris is an open enrollment, public elementary school of choice. The school may accept out-of-state students on a space-available basis (tuition will apply). Enrolling students must reach, at minimum, their fifth birthday by August 31st.

Students enrolled at Polaris are automatically re-enrolled for the following school year, provided that they are in good standing at the school. A letter of intent will be required from families prior to the end of each school year. This will classify the number of possible spaces for the following school year. As a family oriented school, we encourage siblings to attend school together. Siblings of enrolled students will be given preference in admission.

In the event that more eligible students apply than the number of spaces available in any grade or program, the board will conduct a lottery according to policy established by the state of New Hampshire. Eligible students who are not chosen in the lottery will be placed on a wait list in the order their names are drawn, according to grade or program. Should a selected student not attend or an opening otherwise occur, placement will be offered based on waiting list order. If a student offered admission from the waitlist declines admission, the board will continue to contact students/parents in the order listed.

Application Procedures

The application process allows the school to understand student needs and abilities to ensure their experience at Polaris is a positive one, should the student enroll. Importantly, the application process is also designed to enable families to make an informed choice about a student's potential for success in the Polaris environment.

Polaris offers a unique opportunity for students to become involved in their own education. There is an expectation for students to make a commitment to excellence and strive to be genuinely involved with opportunities that the school provides. Student involvement begins at the time of application.

Polaris is open to all elementary-aged students in New Hampshire; however, the students more likely to benefit from Polaris' differentiated approach will demonstrate some of the following characteristics of high academic potential, as defined by Renzulli, Smith, White, Callahan, Hartman, & Westburg 2002; Clark 2002; Silverman 1997-2004:

- Academic performance well above grade level in one or more areas
- Exceptional abstract reasoning skills
- Continuous curiosity and drive to learn
- Unusual creativity, an independent thinker
- Unusual commitment, intensity, and persistence.

1. The school will provide its program information, application procedures, and application forms to New Hampshire public school personnel. Polaris will have a website with complete application procedures and forms available online.

2. The school will have one or more admission decision deadlines. Dates and guidelines for admissions decision-making and lottery will be available to applicants.

3. Students will submit a completed school application package that will include a personal statement of interest in the school and student questionnaire. A Portfolio is recommended. Portfolio contents allow students to offer materials that enhance the Admissions Committee's understanding of the student. Examples of portfolio material may include artistic work, creative writing, science or math projects, and audio or video tapes. Letters of recommendation are required.

4. Applicants will provide all available records of achievement such as testing results, portfolios, official records/report cards, extra-curricular interests, etc.

5. Once the application is complete, the applying student and parent or guardian will be invited for a visit to the charter school. Before the school opens, students will have opportunities to see the location and go to information sessions.

6. The student and parent will be required to meet with the Admissions Committee or designated staff to review the program and share expectation and interests. The student will be given the opportunity to demonstrate some of the traits defined above, in a variety of ways. Alternatively, the student is also welcome to provide video evidence of

these traits. The results of the meeting will be provided to the Admissions Committee and school staff.

7. Should the Admissions Committee decide further evaluation would be beneficial; the committee may contact the sending school district to request such evaluations be provided.

8. The student and parent will review the responsibilities, rules, and commitments necessary to attend and sign a statement of acceptance of the policies and programs of the school. This confirms the student's intent to be an applicant for the school. If a student is enrolled in a school district special education program, the respective special education department will be notified of the student's request for admission, but such students are continued in the lottery pool.

9. The Admissions Committee and parent/ guardian must agree that the applicant is likely to benefit from this specific charter school program.

10. The applicant student and his/her parent will agree to the mission of the school, its policies, programs, and expectations.

(p) Philosophy of Student Governance and Discipline, and Age-Appropriate Due Process Procedures to be used for Disciplinary Matters Including Suspension and Expulsion

Polaris' philosophy of student governance includes having clear expectations of all members of the school community. Students will be expected to become "citizens" of their community and demonstrate behaviors and skills which promote a positive school environment.

As elementary school students, emphasis will be placed in the classroom on developing lifelong skills such as:

- Responsibility for one's actions
- Developing caring friendships which are inclusive of others
- Conflict management
- Self control
- Acceptance of differences in others
- Identifying and communicating one's needs
- Self esteem

The school is committed to a respectful and safe environment for all. Specific governance and discipline procedures will be written in a handbook that students and parents will receive. The policies will outline the school's procedures for student governance and discipline and will include clear and fair guidelines; a support system to help students understand and change their behavior, if needed; and consequences if students cannot or will not participate in school according to school policies and guidelines.

Polaris will comply with statutes that prohibit bullying and harassment, fighting, drugs, alcohol, smoking, and any other dangerous behavior. A student may be suspended or expelled in accordance with statute and policy.

Polaris will provide fair and age appropriate due process in administering student discipline and will comply with current suspension and expulsion provisions in RSA 193:13 (Suspension and Expulsion of Pupils): A pupil may withdraw from a charter school based on criteria determined by the Board of Trustees consistent with the advice of the principal and teachers in conformance with RSA 193:13. No public school shall be obligated to enroll an expelled pupil.

Commitment to Conflict Mediation and Dispute Resolution

Internal disputes include all disputes among and between students, staff, parents, volunteers, or advisors. Polaris advocates maintaining open lines of communication within the "school community" i.e. the parents, students, volunteers, staff, administration, and the Board of Trustees with the intention of resolving all disputes in a timely fashion and in accordance with school policies which shall be outlined in the Polaris Handbook. All members of the school community are required to agree to work within these policies.

The dispute resolution process shall begin with the School Director. The Director shall meet with all parties involved in the dispute and will keep on file a written copy of any agreement reached. In the event that the dispute cannot be resolved by the Director in a timely manner, the dispute shall be referred to the Board for resolution. If agreement is reached, this will be noted and recorded in the minutes of the Board and a copy sent by U.S. mail to each party. In the event that agreement is not reached, the decision of the Board by simple majority vote shall be final. All parties shall be notified in writing of the resolution by U.S. mail.

(q) Method of Administering Fiscal Accounts and Reporting, Including a Provision Requiring Fiscal Audits and Reports to be Performed by an Independent Certified Public Accountant

Submitters of Polaris have formed a non-profit foundation which will apply for a federal start-up grant. Polaris Charter Foundation will follow public school accounting guidelines and will put in place internal accounting controls necessary to safeguard its assets. Polaris will maintain accurate financial records in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) for public schools. An annual financial report will be provided with audit by an independent, certified public accountant.

Polaris' Board of Trustees will appoint a Treasurer (contingent on approval) who will provide the oversight necessary to monitor the school's financial status. The Board of Trustees shall also adopt policies for the financial management of the school, including policies on Conflict of Interest for Board members and faculty.

A general account has been set up with Bank of America for the administration of funds. In addition, a discretionary account will be set up. The Board of Trustees will establish a maximum cap for discretionary expenditures.

Additional accounts will be set up for endowment funds and restricted grant awards. The Treasurer and two other Board members designated by the Board will have check-writing authority. Two signatures will be required for withdrawal of funds from any of the above accounts.

Except for emergency purchases cleared with the school Director, all expenditures and contracts will be handled through an encumbrance system of purchase orders for clear tracking of expenditures and status of account balances.

Each individual with check writing authority will be covered by a fidelity bond in accordance with guidelines of New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration. Accounting activities will consist payroll paid to school personnel and the maintenance of an accounts payable system to track amounts due vendors of the school.

Polaris shall comply with all requirements specified in the law pertaining to reporting requirements (RSA 194- B: 10, I-V). This list includes annual report, annual financial audit and report, program audit, and participation during the annual school budget process.

Pursuant to Ed 318.07, Polaris will produce an annual report which will include the following elements:

- A general progress report to establish the initial school program, a process that will require considerable flexibility and energy.

- An assessment and report of how Polaris is meeting its educational and financial goals, as identified in its mission statement.
- Changes, if any, in the organizational structure and make-up of the Board of Trustees.
- Assessment and report of business, parent, and volunteer involvement in the school.
- Description of community services available at the site.
- A report of enrollment statistics including but not limited to, attendance, per-class enrollment, graduation rates and any occurrences of withdrawal. Commentary about successes in program, collaboration, or goal achievement.
- School calendar.
- Financial statement and balance sheet identifying Polaris' asset, liability, and fund balances or equities.
- Projections of income and expenses for the upcoming school year.

(r) Annual Budget, Including all Sources of Funding

Polaris will use the state's average elementary and middle school tuition costs as a basis for shaping its own budget, attempting to comply with the 80% of average per pupil funding guideline of RSA 194-B.

Polaris will apply for a federal charter school grant through Polaris Charter School Foundation a non-profit corporation formed to support the charter school in order to supplement state per pupil funding. Polaris has acquired a sample of the grant application and has obtained the information needed to submit this formal document should we be approved. An application for 501c 3 non-profit status is in the process of being submitted.

Founding members of the charter school recognize that the financial sustainability of a charter school requires a long-term fiscal plan, especially after the expiration of the federal grant. We are currently investigating multiple revenue sources such as before and after school child care services, summer camps, enrichment programs, grants, and an annual fund drive seeking private and business donations. A portion of all money raised will be used to establish an endowment fund to support long-term fiscal sustainability.

Please see Appendix A for projected budgeted amounts which are provided as estimates only to indicate how the school anticipates evolving from the start in September, 2012, through full enrollment.

(s) School Calendar Arrangement and the Number and Duration of Days Pupils are to be Served Pursuant to RSA 194-B. 8, III

The Polaris Charter School will be in session at least the number of days required by state law; currently, 180 days. School operating hours are Monday-Friday approximately 8:45-2:45, not including before and after school care.

Annually, the Board of Trustees will approve a school calendar that conforms to rules and laws of the state as to the number and duration of days required by law, including any existing provisions for exceptions that may be pursued.

All school policy on time and use in calendar will be in conformance with laws that apply.

(t) Provision for Providing Continuing Evidence of Adequate Insurance Coverage

Polaris, pursuant to RSA 194-B:1, III, will be a public school subject to the same protections as any public school under RSA 507 (b) which provides for Limited General Liability for the charter school and its agents.

Polaris will pursue, procure, and provide evidence of a comprehensive liability insurance program that provides protection needed for a public school charter, including workman's compensation, board errors and omissions, and faculty coverage. The insurance program will be in place as the first Board of Trustees begins its duties.

(u) Identity of Consultants to be Used for Various Services, if Known

During this period of planning and development, Polaris will require numerous tasks addressed by specialists in fields of charter schools, assessment, school administration, insurance, finance, public relations, curriculum, instruction, special education, business, technology, science and engineering, and strategic planning.

(v) Philosophy of Parent Involvement and Related Plans and Procedures

Parental involvement is a core philosophical commitment of the school. The school will have a well-defined parent involvement initiative through the Parent Steering Committee. The parent steering committee will have two representatives on the Board of Trustees and have regular attendance at their meetings by the School Director. Parents can bring their concerns to the annual all School Meeting and have input into

hiring through participation of hiring committees. Polaris believes that parents are an integral part of the school community and bring valuable input, energy and skills to the school's success.

Not all students have parents to share in their academic interests. The school will identify business and community members who are available as mentors, providing guidance specific to students' interests.

A Parenting Steering Committee will be created within the first few weeks of school. The Committee serves as the communication vehicle between parents, the School Director and Board of Trustees.

The Committee will also be responsible for:

- Celebrations in the classrooms.
- Working with teachers to identify classroom needs not included in the budget.
- Bringing forth parent concerns to the School Director and Board of Trustees Serving on hiring committees.
- Giving annual feedback on teacher effectiveness to School Director.
- Fundraising and donation requests.

(w) A Plan to Develop and Disseminate Information to Assist Parents and Pupils with Decision-Making About their Choice of School

To ensure all residents have an equal opportunity to apply to the charter school, an extensive public marketing effort will be initiated through the Polaris Charter Foundation. As students from lower income or minority families may suffer disproportionately due to a lack of access to technology or to advanced curriculum, particular attention will be paid to reaching those students through their schools, communities, and services to ensure their families are aware of Polaris as a choice available to them.

Direct relationships with the State of NH, educational facilities, doctors and specialists are underway in an effort to identify children most likely to benefit from Polaris' program. Our approach to school districts will be open and positive with the intention of creating partnerships from day one.

We have identified a marketing communications professional, Robert Minicucci, to help us launch our marketing initiatives. During the initial months of planning, information will be disseminated through bulletins, advisories, social media and posting on informational websites. Materials for a major informational outreach program will be disseminated to public school administrators, school personnel, parents, businesses, and foundations.

Upon approval of the charter, the Board of the Polaris Charter Foundation will develop informational brochures describing the school, its mission, its approach to education, and the expectations and opportunities the program hopes to provide. Informational brochures will be distributed to businesses, parents, residents, and school faculty via newspaper, magazines, education advocates, mail, email and social media broadcasts.

(x) A Global Hold Harmless Clause

In accordance with RSA 194-B: 3, II(x), Polaris, its successors, and assigns, covenants and agrees at all times to indemnify and hold harmless any other school district which sends its students to the charter school, and their school boards, officers, directors, agents, employees, all funding districts and sources, and their successors and assigns, (the “indemnified parties”) from any and all claims, demands, actions and causes of action, whether in law or in equity, and all damages, costs, losses, and expenses, including but not limited to reasonable attorneys’ fees and legal costs, for any action or inaction of the charter school, its board, officers, employees, agents, representatives, contractors, guests and invitees, or pupils.

(y) Severability Provisions and Statement of Assurance

Any provision of the charter school contract found by competent authority to be contrary to applicable law, rule, or regulation shall not be enforceable.

(z) Provision for Dissolution of the Charter School Including Disposition of its Assets

The Board of Trustees, in the event of dissolution or revocation, would develop a prompt but strategic plan that addresses debt obligation, contracts, and assets. All property that Polaris has leased, borrowed, or contracted for use shall be returned or handled according to contractual prearrangement. Disposal of other property, furniture, supplies, equipment, vehicles, and the like will be handled as follows:

- The board will first consider any debt obligation and will research the disposal of property, etc., that best enables the Trustees to meet its debts.
- Once debt obligations are met, any remaining property and assets of the school will be distributed depending on how it was obtained. Items obtained through federal or state charter school funding will be offered to other charter schools or to otherwise identified parties in funding agreements. Assets provided with funds from local

school districts will be offered to public schools in a manner deemed fair and appropriate (e.g., either returned to the district that provided the asset or liquidated and distributed on a participation basis). Unwanted items will be consigned in the most beneficial manner with the proceeds reverting to the New Hampshire's charter school support fund.

- All property personally or individually owned by the employees of the charter school shall be exempt from distribution of property as prescribed herein and shall remain the property of the individual teachers and staff. Such property includes, but is not limited to, albums, curricular manuals, personal mementos and other material or apparatus that have been personally financed, acquired, or developed by teachers and staff.
- All outstanding debts/encumbrances for which the charter school is legally liable will be properly settled with the creditor of record. Under no circumstances shall a sending school district be liable for any obligations of the dissolved charter school. Polaris shall coordinate any planned or voluntary bankruptcy filing with the area school boards where Polaris students reside to facilitate reintegration of its students. A minimum notice of 120 days for voluntary dissolution of the charter school will be given to school districts with students at Polaris.

(aa) In the Case of the Conversion of a Public School to a Charter Conversion School, Provision for Alternative Arrangements for Pupils who Choose Not to Attend and Teachers who Choose Not to Teach at the Charter School

Not applicable.

(bb) A Plan for the Education of the School's Pupils After the Charter School May Cease Operation

A plan for each student's continued education, should the school cease to exist, will be determined individually with each student and his/her parent or legal guardian. Likely options would be: 1) reintegration into the student's assigned public school; 2) application to a different chartered public school, if available; 3) other available options based on parent and student priorities.

Upon cessation of operation, the records of all the students would be transferred in a timely manner to the receiving school, and the staff and trustees would work with the receiving school to assure a smooth and timely transition.

(cc) In Addition to an Application, Each Charter School Applicant, in Consultation with the Local School Board, Shall Prepare a Proposed Contract

Not applicable.

(dd) An Outline of the Proposed Accountability Plan which Clarifies Expectations for Evaluating the School's Program and which Contains an Acknowledgement that a Full Accountability Plan Shall be Developed and Ready to Implement Prior to the Date of Opening

Polaris Charter School will follow the NH Accountability Process Plan, in compliance with the requirements of RSA 194-B, Polaris will submit annual accountability reports that will cover each of the areas required by the New Hampshire Charter School Accountability Process. These will include reports of progress that covers governance, financial operations, student enrollment, and progress toward meeting goals, parental involvement and outreach. Polaris will use data and narrative statements that provide evidence to answer each of the following questions especially as outlined in section (g) Academic and Other Learning Goals and Objectives.

1. Is the school making progress toward achieving its mission?
2. Is the school responsibly using public funds?
3. Is the school promoting student attainment of expected knowledge and skills?
4. Is the school sustainable?

An annual report will be prepared and submitted to the State Board of Education for their review in August following each academic year (outlined in Appendix C). The accountability plan shall be developed and ready to implement prior to the date of opening. Reports will be submitted according the NH Accountability Process Timeline.

Timeline for Accountability Checkpoints: Years 1 Through 4

- **December 1 of Opening year 2:**
Accountability plan (per RSA 194-B) review and feedback on
Measurement of goals
Staff qualifications (form A12A Part B) compliance check
Enrollment (Form A12A Part A)
Health, fire and safety inspection reports compliance check

Evidence of insurance coverage compliance check

- **Fall Reports:**

October 1

October 15

- **Monthly:**

Board minutes review to assure effective governance practices

Progress toward school goals compare with targets in accountability plan

- **Quarterly:**

Nov. 15

Jan. 30

Apr. 15

June 30: Financial report check to see if complies with standards.

- **Annually:**

August 1: Year-end summary of school performance review and verification as needed to assess performance.

- **End of Year Reports**

August 1: Attendance, graduation, etc. (Form A3 and others, as appropriate)

- **Annually**

September 30: Independent financial audit request for action if any material defects.

(Appendix A) Budget

Please see pages 41 - 44 for the budget spreadsheet.